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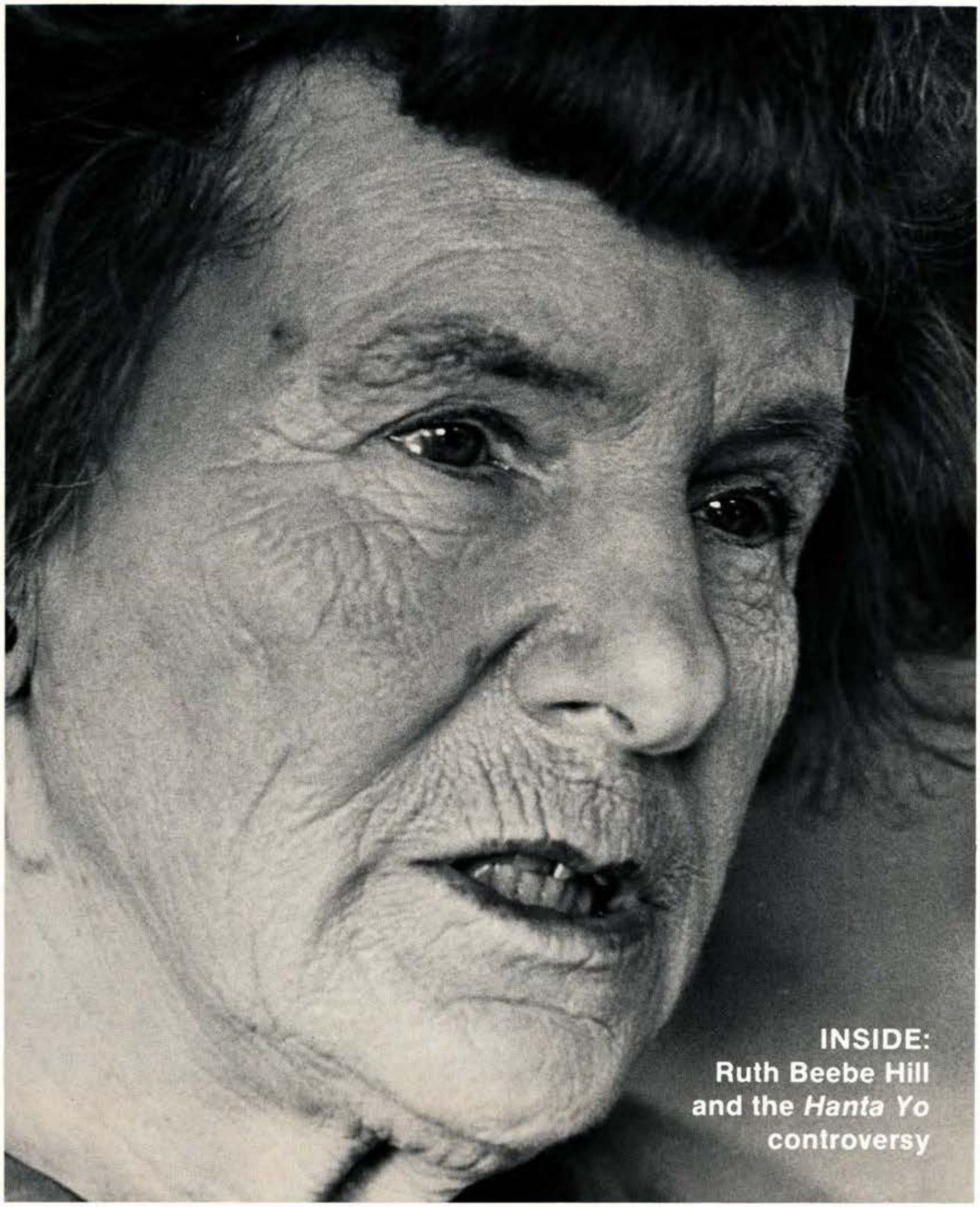

INSIDE:
Ruth Beebe Hill
and the *Hanta Yo*
controversy

KLIPSUN

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4 NOVEMBER

Just passing through . . .

"No one is a bum" — but many people need a place to stay. Bob Curlow and the Lighthouse Mission want to help.

BY MARK HIGGINS

It's seven o'clock on a Friday night. The service, about to begin, is interrupted by several stragglers weaving into the chapel. No one bothers to close the door.

The 17 men, carefully selecting seats near the back, show little interest as the night's message — "The Greatest Miracle in the World" — is announced. Most have lost their belief in miracles long ago.

But they came anyway. Some are required to attend. Others, perhaps because the night is cold. And it's warm inside. For whatever reason, the Light House Mission staff welcomes them.

The one-hour program begins with a rousing honky-tonk piano arrangement of "The Old Rugged Cross." The men, dressed in weathered clothes, worn loafers and wrinkled polyester jackets, start to sing.

Softly at first. They concentrate only on the tattered song books. No one looks around. Each man adds something of his own to the music —a toe-tap, a musical hum or an off-key warble.

The stark room, formed from drab cinderblocks, is briefly forgotten as the grizzled, old men, the young guys with long ponytails, the Indians, blacks and Mexicans join together and sing.

When the last song ends, the chaplain begins an up-beat sermon on life's miracles. The atmosphere subtly shifts.

A young, black man begins to carefully clip his finger nails. Behind him an Indian, slumped in his chair, sketches a picture of a woman on the back of his program. His hands tremble.

Across from him, an old man begins to pick distractedly at the lint on his flannel shirt. Several gnats circle through the audience.

The stuffy room is saturated with the smell of a gym locker-room.

And then it is over. The men quickly file out into the main lobby. Some disappear upstairs to watch television. The rest wander outside to the front steps. Cigarette smoke and small talk fills the air. The men look out to the street unsure of what direction to take. If any.

These men, like a thousand others, are transients and there really is no place for them to go.

So, they don't leave. At least for tonight. Instead, they stay at the Light House Mission, 910 W. Holly St.

The Mission provides free housing for transient men. No questions are asked of the men and no forms exist to be filled out.

The three-story cinderblock building contains enough cots and floor space to house 50 men. Besides the dormitory-style housing on the top floor, the Mission has several staff apartments spotted throughout the building.

The largest room, by design, is the chapel. Several doors, all with locks, run along the near wall. Behind one door is a confessional. Behind another is the small office cubicle of chaplain Fred Curlow.

This room is where Curlow "works for God."

Seated in a metal office chair Curlow is eager to talk about the mission and the transient population it serves. His small frame moves restlessly in the chair as he talks.

"Many of the men feel threatened. They'll come here off the streets carrying all kinds of weapons —great big, long, knives — even guns. But they can't keep them if they want to stay.

"Can you imagine," the chaplain continues, "this one man tried to bring in a gaff hook?" His hands spread wide displaying the imaginary length of the steel-tipped tool.

The phone interrupted his thoughts. He listened and finally asked if he could call back.

"It's like that all the time," he said. "I've been here at the Mission for 10 months and a lot of people in Bellingham need help. I guess that's one good reason I stay here."

Before coming to the Mission, Curlow said he spent 20 years in the ministry. Traveling from one northwest parish to another he made his life work preaching to the "Sunday-only" audiences.

Curlow insists that he won't leave the Mission.

When Curlow arrived at the Mission he noticed a radical change in his audience.

"These fellas know they're down at the bottom of the barrel. They don't need to be condemned or even reminded of where they're at. I make it a point never to preach at them," he said.

Many of these men have never been accepted by their own families, let alone society, Curlow said. Most of the men he counsels have experienced an emotional upheaval. Alcohol, drugs, marriage and employment are all common problems, he added.

The result is a man lonely and depressed, angered and frustrated by a world that turns away, Curlow said.

"But people have a tendency to forget that these men all have something to give. No one is a bum. They need to know that someone cares what happens to them. We can't afford to let them slide away — we need to help lift them back into society," he said.

Besides the men's spiritual and physical needs, the Mission creates employment in a variety of ways, Mission Director, Al Archer, said.

"We feel work is essential in rehabilitation. We have them do small maintenance and repair work around the Mission. Our laundry (sheets and towels) is done twice a week and it takes a certain amount of janitorial work to keep the Mission clean," Archer said.

Another source of employment and revenue is the surplus store the Mission operates at 909 W. Holly St.

By working part of the day the men can earn their meal tickets and still have time to pursue other needs such as education, employment or counseling, which Archer encourages.

However, not everyone who eats at the Mission lives there. The kitchen staff, which prepares about 2,500 meals a month, serves residents and the community. Donations are not necessary.

The newest cook at the Mission is Jim Griffin.

The Bellingham Police Department's K-Nine unit sniffed out Grif-

Mission residents come and go as they like. While some work, others watch television or simply walk the streets.

fin about five weeks ago. He was found camping in a residential area within city limits. He was given two options by the officer — either pack his gear or stay at the Mission.

He chose the latter.

Archer said it is not unusual for the police to bring men to the Mission. Although the Mission is a non-profit organization and receives no money from city or state government, he said they work closely with agencies in Bellingham including the Department of Social and Health Services, the Salvation Army and the YWCA.

Griffin, 38, said he has been on the road for over two years. After divorcing his wife, Griffin said he traveled across the U.S. "to forget the terrible pain and sorrow" he felt.

Griffin said he worked a number a jobs including a circus in Florida and later with a rodeo circuit. He said he never had much money and never stayed in one town for very long.

"I've broken away from the mainstream of life," he said in a soft, eastern accent. "It's like running, I guess."

When he came to the Mission he was thankful for a place to sleep and shower. After eating at the Mission for several days, however, Griffin said he soon contemplated his next move.

"Ya' know, I never have been one to waste food, but one night they served up this fish and that was it — I threw it out. It was terrible," he said.

At that time he was washing dishes in the kitchen. After mentioning that he could cook Griffin was given the job a week later.

"My first meals were like feasts to these guys. They kept saying 'far out' or 'we haven't been fed like this in a long time.' They love what I cooked them, ya' know. I guess it is the extra stuff I do for them," Griffin said.

Griffin is uncertain about his future. He plans to leave Bellingham in a couple of weeks. As he talks his eyes move out to meet the horizon. He scuffs his worn boots in the dirt outside the Mission.

"I'm getting older now. I would like to meet the right girl and devote my life to helping people who know the hard times. But the road has taken the monotony out of my life and added . . . a bit of its own sweetness," he said.

The "call of the road" is a common chord for many transients. Chaplain Curlow said he noticed an increase in the last several months in the number of men arriving from across the country.

Curlow and Archer said they feel concerned over the increasing number of transients looking for help. Both men said the colder weather and the expense of food and housing will bring more people to the Mission.

"But we will bend over seven ways backwards to find them a place to sleep. I think we should all worry about the guys who sleep under the bridges and in the parks," Curlow said.

His perpetual smile seemed to fade at the thought. •

HANTA

Ruth Beebe Hill clears the way

After 30 years in the woods, this San Juan Island author has emerged with a controversial best-selling novel soon to be a television drama.

BY GREGG OLSEN

Author Ruth Beebe Hill has the kind of personality that can overwhelm. Two-bit talk show hosts and journalists looking to get ahead tend to term such flashes in style as arrogance. In Hill's case, they couldn't be more wrong. To put it quite simply, this woman has realized what often takes others weekly stints on an analyst's couch. Ruth Beebe Hill is self-assured.

She is also intelligent, kind-hearted and now, controversial.

The controversy concerns *Hanta Yo,* Hill's critically acclaimed, best-selling tome of the lives of a small band of Teton Sioux prior to the encroachment of the white man. Some Indian activists have challenged the accuracy of the "documented novel" and have called specific passages "demeaning."

Another target of attack is Hill's Lakotah translator and collaborator, a Santee Sioux named Chunksa Yuha. Chunksa, 75, provided the Indian spirituality and "altitude of mind" crucial to the book's detailed narrative. The activists maintain that Chunksa is not the Sioux linguist or culture authority he has professed to be.

Chunksa, Hill and her husband, Boroughs "Buzzy" Reid Hill, a retired biochemist, have made their home for the past nine years in four cedar cabins sequestered among the conifers on San Juan Island.

Hill, 66, raises the mylar shades that have blocked the sun's harsh morning rays from scorching the interior of the largest of the cottages.

"I don't like the dark," she says, "but the sun is so hard on my skin. It's so sensitive."

At that moment, Hill is vulnerable. And yet, still quite strong. Press accounts of her persona never deviate from a decisive, tough-talking image. But as Hill's gentleness shows through her voice's timbre and manner, it is clear: there is more to this complex woman than a couple of adjectives could possibly render.

She talks about her new wash 'n' wear permanent, her face showing the disdain of paying $55 for it. "I thought the hairdresser meant $5.50," she says, shaping her tawny brown hair with her fingertips.

"I guess I was too long in the woods with the Indians," she says, excusing herself of her lack of experience with life's trivia, including wash 'n' wear permanents.

Indeed the author did spend a long time in the woods. Almost 30 years went into researching *Hanta Yo*— visiting reservations, interviewing nearly 1,000 Indians and backpacking into the wilderness — all to make her novel a definitive, accurate statement of Sioux life circa 1764 to 1834.

With that taken into consideration, it is easy to understand Hill's indignation at the mention of the controversy surrounding her book's authenticity. To her, the controversy does not exist. "I rescind and refute nothing in *Hanta Yo.*"

Though her characters are fictitious, Hill says the events are true. "Everything in *Hanta Yo* happened. I imagined being there; that's the only imagination in *Hanta Yo.*"

The activists, led by Indian author Vine Deloria, disagree. Their complaints include the book's references to homosexuality, oral sex, a woman's eating of a placenta and the claim that Hill and Chunksa wrote the novel entirely in the Lakotah dialect.

Immediately, Hill abolishes the notion that the book was written in its entirety in Lakotah. "No white man's book could be translated into archaic Lakotah." To give the novel the desired Indian cadence, Hill and Chunksa merely translated "important concepts and phrases" into the Sioux language — not every word.

Translating the phrases was not a simple task. Hill points out that the Indian language spoken on modern

A small portion of the deluge of letters and clippings Hill has amassed concerning *Hanta Yo*. Most of the correspondence has been from non-Indians. Hill explains: "Indians don't write letters. I've even got letters from Indians saying they don't write letters."

reservations is a montage of Sioux and English. "You have words that are contractions. Indians did not use them. I wanted to learn the language based on concepts that had no 'white' connotations," she says, slowly for emphasis.

The result is a book written without contractions or subjunctives. Indians also had no form of the verb "to be." Says Hill: "The premise of 'to be' is Hamlet, not Indian."

Her collaboration with Chunksa Yuha was a result of her efforts to understand the Indian language and "altitude of mind." No one had been able to give the budding writer satisfactory Lakotah names for the different variations of hail.

Until she met Chunksa in 1963, most translations were "frozen rain," which she says is a white man's concept.

Indian words are more specific than their Anglo counterparts. "In Indian, hail is not just frozen rain. Is it the size of golf balls or bird shot? Does it sound like this on the tipi skins?" she asks as she rapidly bounces her fingernails against the arm of her chair. "Each different type of hail had its own name, based on its characteristics."

To illustrate the importance she placed on understanding the Indian mind and language, Hill gets up from her seat and fumbles through an overflowing storage closet. After a moment, she returns, holding a stuffed, weasel-like animal.

"What do you think the Indians called this?" she asks, reminding that Indian names are based on description. She coaxes for answers and then patiently listens to the feeble efforts: "small, brown, furry animal?"

Hill shakes her head no. Gently rotating the stiff animal to expose its soft underside, the author locates a creamy dollop of fur below its chin.

"The name for the mink is Ikusan, which translates to 'off-white spot under chin.' What other name could be more appropriate?"

Indians named all creatures ("Indians don't use the term 'animal'") in the same manner. For instance, the Lakotah word for beaver translates to 'creature who swims with stick in mouth.' Hill says she had to relinquish her Anglo thought processes in order to fully understand and appreciate such concepts.

"I had to learn to think Indian," she says, succinctly.

Hill can trace her fascination with American Indians to her childhood in Cleveland Heights, Ohio. The daughter of an engineer ("upper middle class, if you must use a label"), Hill visited a reservation in Pennsylvania at the age of nine.

An essay based on that experience won her a "mama doll" in a contest sponsored by the Cleveland Plain Dealer newspaper.

In high school, Hill sharpened her writing and reporting skills as the editor of the student body newspaper, "The Black and Gold." Almost 50 years since, she proudly notes that she was the first female editor of the newspaper that received top honors under her direction.

After Hill completed a degree in geology at Western Reserve University, she began to actively research Indian history for *Hanta Yo*. She spent three years devouring the subject at UCLA's library. Her summers were spent in the field. When invited to do so, Hill often stayed on reservations, sometimes for weeks at a time. "To get the feel of Indian," she says.

In 1959, Hill ghostwrote her only other book, "Conquering Your Allergy." No, she says, she did not have any allergies; "They're for emotional people." She searches through one of the many bookshelves that line the

Different versions of the novel that spent 28 weeks on the New York Times bestseller list last year. The German language version has done "exceptionally" well, Hill says. The paperback went into another printing last month, making 1.25 million copies in print.

cottage wall and retrieves a copy of that book. The author displays a frayed note tucked between its endsheets. It is a two-decade-old message from the book's "author" instructing Hill on a chapter. Hill smiles when she recalls that she was able to turn such scribble into complete chapters.

She had to. She needed the money to purchase a new typewriter and continue work on *Hanta Yo*. Before the novel was finished, Hill would wear out a total of three typewriters.

"I felt it was the most exquisite expression of a sexual experience ever written. Everyone should take that ceremony."

"The book forced me to learn discipline in writing and research," she says, shelving "Conquering Your Allergy."

To finance her research and travels, Hill wrote a number of articles for such publications as "The Disneylander" and "Western Life (featuring the horse)." Of her articles for the latter, Hill says: "It was some of the best work I ever did. I wrote the way I wanted to, not like in *Hanta Yo.*"

Coffee water steams. The hostess offers three kinds of coffee, all instant. She makes a sour face at one national brand. "Whew, this one smells," she pauses, as is her style, "like elk droppings."

"Fresh or dried?"

Without hesitation Hill answers, "Obviously dried." She is positive. Ruth Beebe Hill knows what she is talking about.

She pours the hot water into delicate china teacups, gifts from Slim Pickens and his wife, Maggie. Hill warmly presides over the tea party atmosphere that dissipates with the next topic of conversation: the *Hanta Yo* controversy.

Concerning the much disputed passage on oral sex as a Sioux marriage ritual, Hill says: "I felt it was the most exquisite expression of a sexual experience ever written. Everyone should take that ceremony. How could it be considered demeaning?" To some, quite easily. *Hanta Yo*'s critics contend that such a ceremony never existed. Hill maintains that she garnered the information from John Gates, a sheriff from Sioux County, South Dakota. Hill and Gates were close. "I lit one of his last smokes before his death in '62."

The page and a half narrative required three months to write. In an effort to maintain authenticity and accuracy, Hill says she showed the manuscript pages to Indian elders for verification.

Hill makes several trips to another storage closet and deposits a couple of cartons of papers and letters and an off-white colored satchel of which she says: "Every answer to any question about *Hanta Yo* is in this."

Hill is proud of the supportive and confirming letters she has received. Most of the letters are from whites —"Indians don't write letters," she says, adding with a wry smile, "I've gotten letters from Indians saying that they don't write letters."

She has even received some pipes. "When Indians send you pipes they're not joking."

Periodically, Hill rummages through the satchel or cartons and pulls out letters that supplement what she has been saying.

Chunksa Yuha, musician, composer and Lakotah translator, enters the cottage and exchanges pleasantries with the hostess and her guests.

At first glance, Chunksa seems a Hollywood stereotype gone haywire. An Indian of Dakotah stock decked out in cowboy attire: shiny boots and a western tie. The grey-haired man speaks carefully selected words in an almost inaudible tone.

ABC expects the television drama to be another "Roots" in the ratings.

Although the man's integrity has been questioned, he shows little signs of depression. Not quite the downtrodden, bitter Sioux portrayed in an article in a Seattle newspaper. Why should he be bitter? After all, Chunksa says he and *Hanta Yo* will be vindicated.

But until then, some discrepancies do exist in his background. Govern-

ment records show that Chunksa, under his "reservation name" Lorenzo Blacksmith, did attend white schools. In earlier interviews and in the novel's preface, Chunksa said he was kept out of white schools and was versed on Sioux culture by Indian elders. Records are hazy and incomplete.

"When you write a book based on fact you debate every word yourself."

Doubleday, the publisher of the novel, presented Chunksa as an Indian with a master's degree in music. Chunksa now concedes a mistake was made. He did not have years of formal education. "Most of my teachers were private tutors," he says, adding, "Master's degrees are for those who want to be teachers. I never did."

"Very much a member" of Hill's family, Chunksa seats himself and listens as Hill explains the context of the brief scene in *Hanta Yo* in which a woman "tastes of" the placenta.

According to Hill, the act was ceremonial, not a primitive means of nourishment. In the novel, the Lakotah were on the move so the woman "tasted of" the afterbirth — symbolic of hiding and destroying — the telltale sign of the tribe's presence. Similarly, upon giving birth, Indian women stifle the cry of their newborn. It was a matter of survival.

Vine Deloria ("Custer Died for Your Sins") has said the placenta scene in *Hanta Yo* has "set Indians back" several hundred years. Hill adamantly disagrees. "There is nothing wrong with the placenta. It is not revolting."

Most anthropologists and Sioux historians agree that the male homosexual or "winkte" did receive a place of importance in Sioux society, yet some of the "howlers" (as Hill sometimes terms her critics) refuse to acknowledge the documented fact.

During a question and answer session following a lecture at Highline Community College in Tacoma, Hill was confronted by a man who was unaware of the winkte's status or very existence.

Hill stands and shows how the man approached her with an outstretched arm and pointing finger. "Sir?" she asks, dramatizing the moment with a mock innocent expression. Imitating the man's gait and gesturing, her voice grows deep and husky. "You said we had homos. Never was there a homo among Indians." The man stood, frozen finger pointing.

She shrugs her shoulders. "I am always willing to talk about my book and any disagreements people have with it in a scholarly challenge." The word "scholarly" is said with an italicized emphasis. Not a debate, she clarifies, but a scholarly challenge. She has already debated the content of *Hanta Yo.*

"When you write a book based on fact you debate every word yourself."

Chunksa agrees to sing. Hill directs him to the closet and his drum. "Box two on the right," she says. The Indian seats himself in the center of the room, near the fireplace. He beats the worn, painted drum and sings what will be used as the title song on the upcoming television production of *Hanta Yo.* His voice is amazingly powerful.

(Translated, he sings:)

"Clear the way, clear the way
In a sacred manner, I come
Grandfather, hear me
Every creature that ever flew,
walked or crawled
Hear me."

He lets out a cry. "We've been attacked," he says playfully. A command to the life force, Chunksa says the warrior song means "I'll put out the effort if you meet me halfway. Damn it. Make it so, make it so."

Chunksa's song prompts conversation about the novel for television now in the works. Who will play the roles? Indians? Whites? Hill says she would prefer Indian actors. Chunksa does not.

"What should we have," he asks, "actors who can act or just Indian actors?"

Hollywood producer David Wolper sent Hill a list of 17 Indian actors, possibles for his production of *Hanta Yo.* "I knew nine of the 17," Hill says, adding sarcastically, "and they were actors?"

Chunksa does not believe the Indian actors are experienced enough to do justice to the major production. Yet he admits quickly that he despises the ideas of "whites in black wigs and make-up."

Though Hill has written a 500-page condensation of her bestseller and will serve as technical advisor, she does not have page by page script approval. And thus far, none of the drafts she has read are anywhere near being acceptable.

The screenplay must follow the premise of her work. It must be accurate. "The producers have to produce *Hanta Yo,* not another motion picture. If that's what they want to do then they should get another book."

Of course the producers will stick with the popular *Hanta Yo.* The controversy won't hurt, either. Word is that ABC expects the television drama to be another "Roots" in the ratings. Others also believe the adaptation might do for Indian history what Alex Haley's saga did for blacks: a deluge of publicity and awareness about an ethnic group.

Careful as she is, Ruth Hill declines any predictions about the impact of the mini-series. She takes a hopeful, let's wait and see, stance.

Hill suggests a walk outside before the sun dips behind the trees and darkens the 40-acre compound. Outside, clear air and teen-aged pines wrap around the four cabins. It seems to be the perfect place to write a book on Indian life before white civilization altered it. A bald eagle clutching a bloody, limp rabbit flies low overhead, punctuating the inspiring scene.

"Look at the eagle!" Hill exclaims, making no attempt to conceal the pleasure she still finds in such sights. Everyone watches in silence until the bird disappears beyond the treeline. "There will be another one by in a minute," she says matter-of-factly. "They always travel in twos."

Ruth Beebe Hill can make statements like that—and she often does—because she knows of such things from her experiences. She is not a woman who found out about life through the Book of the Month Club. Her research was from life. It was imperative that she know and understand all she would write about.

Chunksa Yuha helps Hill up a grassy incline. The 75-year-old Dakotah is adament: In time, he and *Hanta Yo* will be vindicated.

She spent various summers climbing in and out of mud-caked beaver lodges, stalking where the buffalo roam, collecting feathers, furs and skulls (reportedly of all of the creatures she writes about in her book) and taking a census of grizzlies in the Alaskan wilderness.

Of that experience Hill asks, "Want to know if the hair on the back of your neck can stand up? It can." She speaks convincingly of the stomach churning fear she felt watching the mammoth bears maul one another a few yards away.

Chunksa didn't partake in that adventure. "I'm smarter than that," he says with the smile that has deeply etched his bronze face.

Hill says she has found raw liver, tripe and beaver tail to be quite tasty. "Not that I'm trying to be like an Indian grandmother," she explains. "I eat it because I like it. It's good."

Once, while traveling across country with a group of Indians, Hill spent five days without food, water or going to the bathroom. "I needed to know I could do it and I did." Upon arriving at their destination in Arizona, Hill took a 10-mile hike with an elderly Indian man. She felt just fine.

"No problem," she says, leading the way to a dried hole littered with a couple of duck decoys. It was a pond her husband and Chunksa dug for her some time ago so that she could sit nearby and observe the animals water always attracts. She recalls the time an eagle grasped one of the decoys and dropped it back, realizing it was a fraud.

The area around the dry hole is overgrown now, a testimony to the Hill's absences to promote the book. She instructs Chunksa to remove the chicken wire around the tree trunks to keep hungry deer from devouring the seedlings.

Waxy, brown madrona leaves crunch loudly under her red slip-ons ("not exactly hiking shoes, huh?"). She asks Chunksa to help her walk up to a mossy rock outcrop. After a few silent moments of enjoying the forested view, the author muses, "So much for the view from the terrace."

On the way to the vegetable garden, dubbed via a routed wood sign "Buzzy's Playpen," Hill notes that her research often required her to prepare meals or light fires with incredible speed. "I can also take a tent down and pack a car in six minutes," she says with an unmistakable air of humor and accomplishment. She can make a fire in three minutes—faster if she had to.

Why the rush? Simple. Fire-starting and car packing is mundane. Hill used her time to interview and research, that was what was of importance to her. She points out with a grin that many of the minute meals she prepared wouldn't have been possible without a can opener.

Inside the enclosed garden, Chunksa liberates a couple of green onions from the moist soil and offers one to Hill, who takes the vegetable and admonishes everyone to do so. "For self defense," she jokes.

Hill stops talking to watch a doe and her fawn come in and out of the mottled shadows of the tall firs. Marvelling only for the briefest moment, Hill treats the sight casually, as if it were an everyday occurrence. For her, it probably is.

A few hours earlier, Hill and her husband purchased the tract behind the spot where the deer foraged. They bought the 4-acre strip of 80-year-old trees and bracken ferns to save it from a developer's bulldozer. The price was outrageous.

Hill sighs. "It depends on your priorities," she says of buying the land. "It's earth."

That's Ruth Beebe Hill. A woman who Chunksa Yuha says "has learned to put the spiritual force to work." A woman who believes the novel she has written will be used in classrooms for study. A woman who is strong and determined.

Her sincerity shows itself in her eyes and the tone of her voice. "Why carry on a guilt complex?" she says of the relationship between whites and Indians. "Upon meeting Indians, white people usually say something like 'It's nice to meet you. I sure feel bad about the way we treated your people.'

"We need to throw off that yoke of guilt. It is not a good basis for friendship or understanding."

She's right. She's sure of that, too.


SMOKE
A TAVERN

HOLY SMOKE
—A Tavern

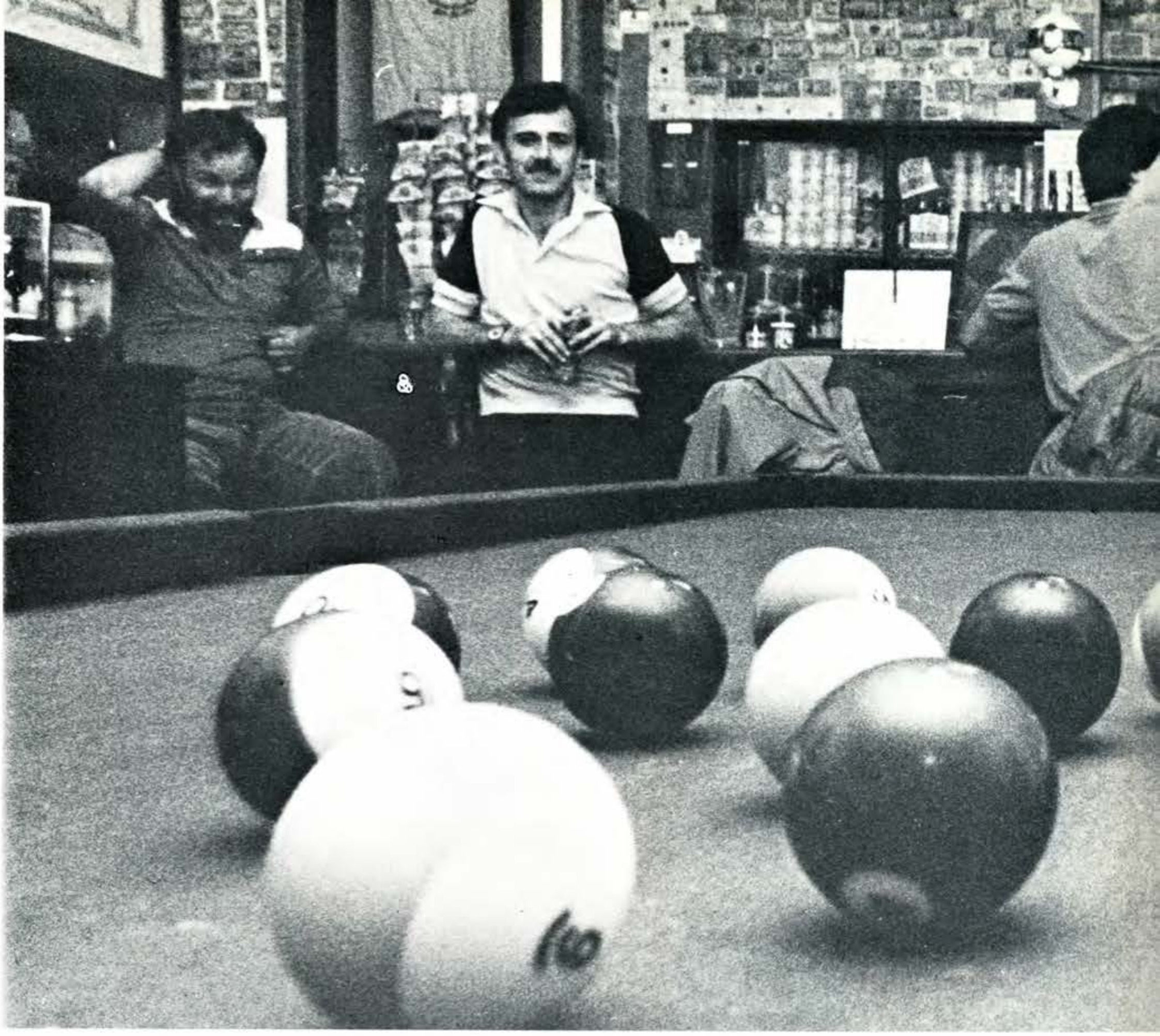
Communion with Coors, pretzels? St. Peter would roll over in his grave.

BY GLENDA CARINO

It's a peculiar feeling to walk into a country church, sit down in a pew, and order a pitcher of beer. But the congregation of people gathered there swear by the service. The two pool tables, juke box and pinball machines also help.

The "church," as it is affectionately called by regulars, is the Holy Smoke Tavern, located in the vacated St. Peter's Catholic Church on the Kendall-Sumas Road in Whatcom County.

The original church structure is still intact with a few important revisions. The altar is now the bar, the



confessional serves as a kitchen, and the original pews were cut in half and are used as benches for the booths.

Owner Joe Schearer plans more expansion but wants to keep the churchy atmosphere.

"When I got out of the Navy I wanted to own a tavern," he said. "I happened to be driving by and saw this vacant building and I said to myself, 'Holy smoke, a tavern!' "

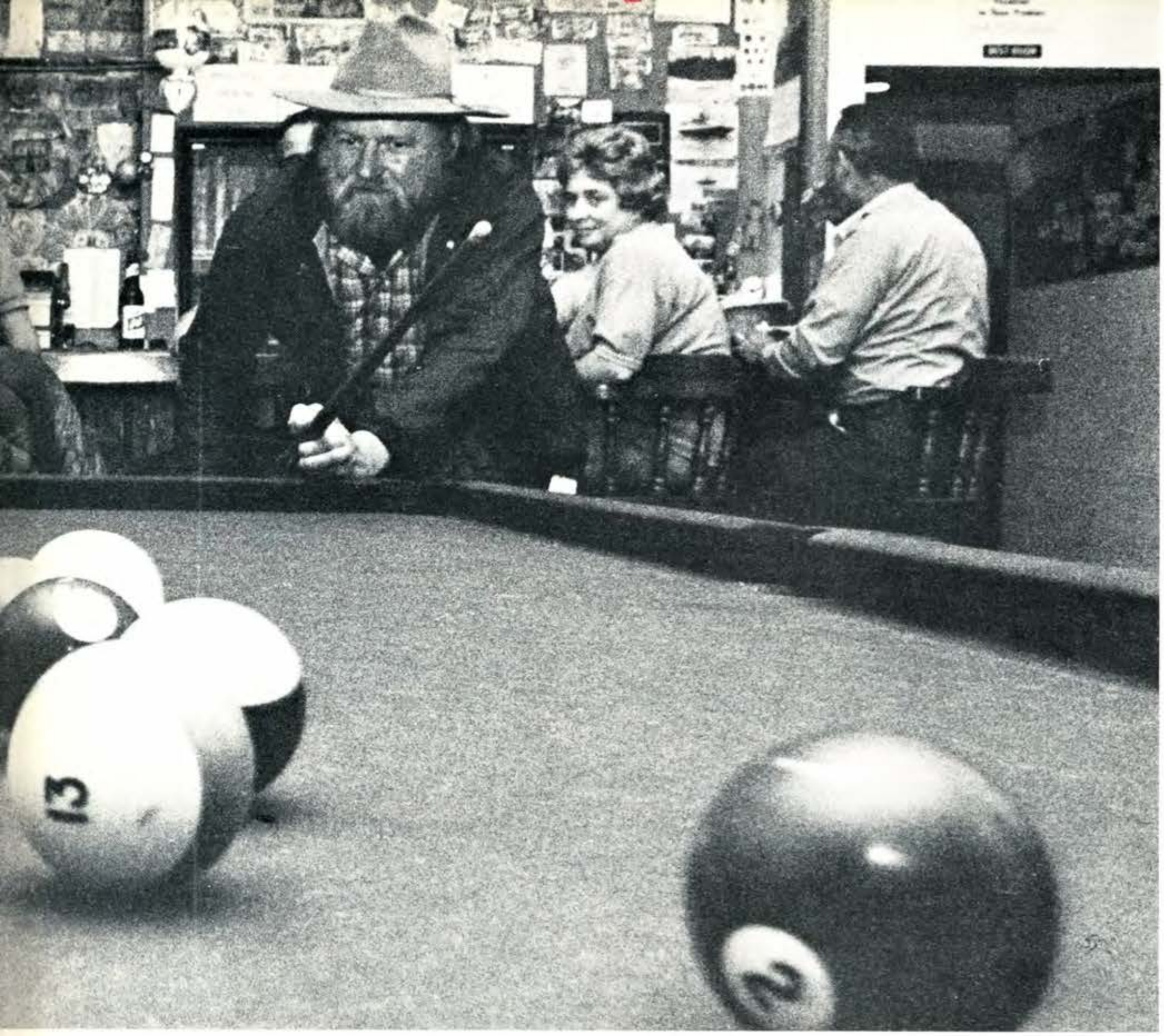
And the tavern has been thriving since then. They celebrated their fourth anniversary in October.

Schearer said the original St. Peter's, built in 1894, burned down in 1910 and his building was built. But seven years ago, the congregation became too big for the small, one-story church and St. Peter's was moved to a bigger building on the Mt. Baker Highway.

Schearer said he had no problems from the parishioners when they found out he wanted to turn the church into a tavern.

"A lot of the people that come in here were married here," he said. "They buried their loved ones here and were baptized here." He pointed to a scruffy-looking man in greasy khakis and a felt hat decorated with beer pull-tabs bending over the pool table. "That guy over there used to be an altar boy here," he said.

"A little old lady came in and sat down. I asked her what I could get her. She said, "I better stick to wine because that's all I've had in here for 16 years'," he recalled.



The wall behind the bar is covered with signed currency from countries as far away as Australia. "A customer came in when we first opened and said he wanted to put the first dollar on the wall. Others wanted to know why and I said for good luck. Since then everybody wants to put one up. I always make them sign it. I have bills up there from all over the world and when they come in again they always look to see if their money is still up on the wall," he said.

Another sign above the kitchen door had one customer stumped. "What does IITYWYBMAB stand for," he asked.

Liz Brandon, the bartender, replied, "If I tell you will you buy me a beer?"

"Sure," he said.

She slowly pointed at the letters and answered, "If I Told You Will You Buy Me A Beer." The customer stared at the sign in disbelief and forked over the money.

Schearer, who was brought up Southern Methodist, has only one strict house rule. "If you ever get barred from this tavern, you are barred for life," he said.

But the customers keep coming back because they like the atmosphere, and especially because they like Joe.

"He's the kind of person you'll do anything for," one customer said.

"And, because we have the best fried chicken in the world, bar none," Liz answered. •

ON WITH LUNACY

From the great Bull Moose himself, Teddy Roosevelt, to the champion liberal John Anderson, third party candidates have always managed to grab a few votes. It's only logical. Except four years ago, when the OWLs flocked in Olympia.

BY BRUCE YEAGER

"It was late one night in the month of August, and as it was an election year the political poop was just beginning to flow uncontrollably," recalled Red Kelly, part-time politician and co-founder of the OWL party

Like many great political parties, the OWLs are of a noble heritage. The party was born four years ago during an all night party in a Tumwater bar.

On this particular evening, Kelly and a bunch of his friends were sitting around discussing some of the jocular aspects of politics and politicians. Among other things, they reminisced of the night a third party candidate for the mayor of Tacoma stumbled into the bar.

"He began practicing his campaign speech and every time somebody proclaimed him as the next mayor of Tacoma, he'd buy the house a round of drinks," Kelly said. "I think when the election was over he got something like 462 votes, which was about how many drinks he paid for that night."

As the night and the liquor wore on, Kelly and his pals got to thinking that it would be fun to create their own political party. The party took its name from Kelly's wife Donna, who called anyone that was a goof "an owl." And so the OWL party, whose platform is "nothing more than fun," came into being.

Kelly never expected the party to go any further than the bar it was created in. But next morning a reporter from NBC in New York was on the phone wanting to know about the OWLs. Apparently one of the spectators in the bar the night before was Olympia's man from the Associated Press, and in a moment of craziness he had put the story on the wire.

"This NBC reporter began asking questions about the OWL party so I just started rolling answers off the top of my head," Kelly said. "And we've been rolling ever since."

The reporter asked Kelly what OWL stood for. After a few seconds of deliberation, Kelly responded, "Out With Logic; On With Lunacy." And that became the motto of the budding party. The reporter then asked Kelly what kind of campaigning the OWL party had done.

"I told the guy we had bumper stickers, and it sounded like such a good idea we decided to go out and get some anyway."

By the end of the day the OWL party was nationally known.

"When NBC broke the story," Kelly said, "reporters began calling me from all over. They'd ask me questions like 'What is your basic political philosophy?' And I'd respond, 'The emancipated chicken'."

"And the one question the reporters kept asking me was 'Why don't you come out here and run? We're getting real sick of our politicians'."

Towards the end of the week, Kelly had been interviewed by reporters from Idaho to Hawaii, and his story had even been picked up by the press in such far away places as Czechoslovakia. "And the one question the reporters kept asking me was 'Why don't you come out here and run? We're getting real sick of our politicians.' "

Kelly has a theory as to why the OWL party received so much attention: "People have been hearing the same old political bullshit for years. So when we turned it

into fun without hurting anybody, which is essential, people loved it."

Kelly admits that he probably never would have gone on with the party except that many of the staunch traditional politicians kept telling him that he could never get away with it. Hearing that was all the inspiration he needed.

"We must get those girls out of those sweaty saunas and back on the streets again."

When it came time for a caucus, Kelly's bar once again became the OWL party headquarters. It was a wild night of drinking and campaigning, as only the OWLs could do it. And when it was over the OWLs had nominated eight different candidates, ranging from governor to Insurance Commissioner.

"In order to handle the paper work there was about 20 minutes of intelligence required," said Kelly, "and my wife handled that."

Kelly himself was the gubernatorial candidate, mouthing such observations as "It has become apparent that unemployment isn't working but inflation is. I feel we have done a good job of getting inflation off of dead center and back on the move again." And "We must get the girls out of those sweaty saunas and back on the streets again. This is gradually being done and I can see the red light at the end of the tunnel on this program."

Running for Lieutenant Governor was Jack "the Ripoff" Lemon, whose platform stated, "Within 24 hours after the election, heads will roll at the state capitol. This will be accomplished by the renting of two Porta-Pottys, placing them on wheels and pushing them over the precipice behind the Governor's Mansion."

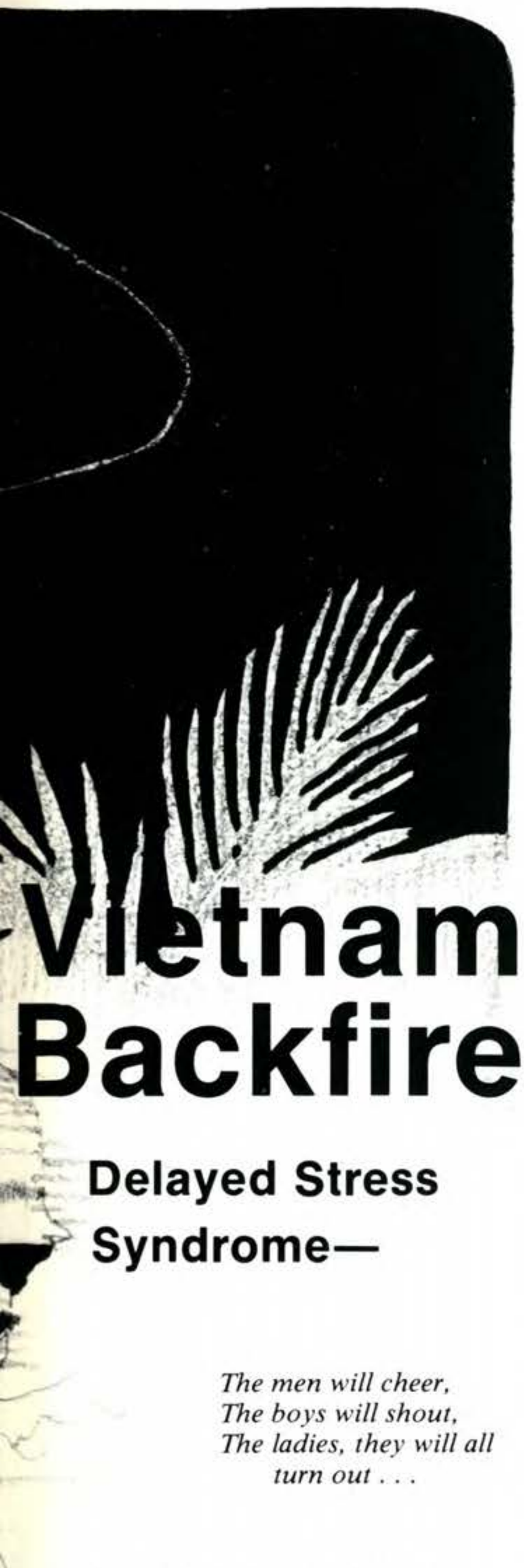
Kelly's mother-in-law, "Fast" Lucy Griswold, the OWL candidate for Secretary of State, took "unequivocal stands against the heartbreak of psoriasis, bed wetting, the big 'O' and post nasal drip." She also developed "unemployment rolls," which she baked for Bruce Chapman.

Other candidates included Jack T. Perciful for State Treasurer, Ruthie "Boom Boom" McInnis for state Auditor, "Bunco" Bob Kelly for Attorney General, Don "Earthquake" Ober for Commissioner of Public Lands and Archie "Whiplash" Breslin for Insurance Commissioner.

When the election of '76 was finally over, the OWL party had made state history by being the first minority party to ever have each of its candidates finish in third place. "Which just goes to show," said Kelly, "that no matter how uptight the politicians get, the voters still perceive the humor of it all."

Unfortunately the OWL party didn't make it onto the ballot this time around. Four of the original candidates have died since the '76 election. "It was just a bit too painful to get going this election," Kelly said, although he added that they were expecting a fair amount of write-in support.

"The OWLs will be back because people need something like us around when they begin to take things too seriously," said Kelly. "Just because we weren't on the ballot this year, doesn't mean anything. We have a lot of support, especially in Olympia. There are a lot of closet OWLs there." •



Vietnam Backfire

Delayed Stress Syndrome—

The men will cheer,
The boys will shout,
The ladies, they will all
turn out . . .

BY GLENDA CARINO

It was three in the morning. The soldier swallowed another government-issued amphetamine. Though the Vietnamese faces assigned to his unit were friendly, he knew he would be a fool to trust them enough to fall asleep. Later, back at camp where it was safe, he would inject himself with the morphine issued to him "for emergencies."

He slumped down on the cold ground next to his buddy, keeping his M-16 ready on his lap. They shared a joke and a Camel as they waited for the signal to move out.

The soldier wondered who of his companions would see the dawn, or would he be the unlucky one to be cut down by enemy gun fire. He shuddered at the thought and quickly brushed it out of his mind. For the moment he would only think of one thing—survival.

"... you got the feeling you were just a part of a big machine. When one piece got worn out you replaced it. So you made damn sure you didn't make any close friends."

Years later and thousands of miles away from Vietnam, the soldier would wake up screaming. It was always the same dream. The sound of guns, the shouts, his buddy lying lifeless on the ground, and the pack of Camels scattered nearby. In his mind, this soldier had not made it all the way home from the war.

A shocking number of Vietnam veterans, estimated to be more than 500,000, suffer from a psychological disorder which renders them helpless in civilian life. The clinical label is Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. It is widely referred to as the Delayed Stress Syndrome, a reaction to the extreme stress soldiers were placed under during and after the war in Southeast Asia.

Major symptoms are depression, anger, anxiety, sleep disturbances, tendency to react under stress with survival tactics, psychic or emotional numbing, loss of interest in work and activities, survivor guilt, flashbacks to Vietnam, negative self-image, memory impairment, difficulty with authority figures and many more.

Dr. John P. Wilson, psychology professor at Cleveland State University, became interested in psychological problems of his Vietnam veteran students.

"I had a large number of Vietnam veterans in my classes," he said. "Many of them shared the same type of symptoms which I called survivor symptoms."

Wilson said he approached the Disabled American Veterans, a non-profit organization based in Washington, D.C., to study the problem. The result was the first major, comprehensive study of Vietnam veterans—the "Forgotten Warrior" research project.

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder is now listed in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM3), the "bible of all categories of mental illness," Wilson said.

"Though it is officially listed as a mental illness, it is qualifiably different than most mental illnesses in that the etiology is based on catastrophic stress," he said. There had to be some kind of catastrophic event which caused the stress, Wilson said.

Dale White, Outreach Coordinator for Washington State Vietnam Program of the Disabled American Veterans, said the war had a "castration effect" on the men and women who served in Vietnam because it cut them off from the rest of the world.

"You went over to Vietnam. You were spread out. You were in a combat zone at all times—no front, no back. The men were on rotation and you got the feeling you were just a part of a big machine. When one piece got worn out you replaced it. So you made damn sure you didn't make any close friends," White said.

"We didn't return like John Wayne. The picture everyone had of us was of drug crazed maniacs, trained to kill."

When the Vietnam veteran came home he was faced with new hostility, this time from the very people he served.

"We were put into a no-win situation. We were expected to lose and when we came back, we were losers. We didn't return like John Wayne. The picture everyone had of us was of drug-crazed maniacs, trained to kill. So the Vietnam

veteran bottled everything up even more," he said.

"It's that build-up of pressures that is unique to Delayed Stress," he said. "Finally, something happens; he loses his job, or can't find a job and he flips out. It's a rage neurosis—everything comes out at once."

Recent studies show a 20 percent higher unemployment rate among veterans of the Vietnam war in Washington State. These veterans also have a 30 percent higher suicide rate than the general population, and of all state and federal prisoners, 33 percent are Vietnam vets.

Other statistics gathered by the Disabled American Veterans showed that of veterans who were married before going to Vietnam, 38 percent were divorced within six months after returning from Southeast Asia. Between 40 and 60 percent of Vietnam veterans have persistent problems with emotional adjustment, according to the DAV report.

In Bellingham, Don Smellgrove of the DAV Service office, sees between five to seven Vietnam veterans a week that are at some stage of Post Traumatic Stress.

"We're not psychologists or sociologists. We're a referral agency. But, we assist them in the office and work fairly closely with Whatcom Counseling Psychiatric Clinic," Smellgrove said.

"They think the government screwed them over in Vietnam and they'll do it again."

Smellgrove's office covers Skagit, Island, Whatcom and San Juan counties. Of the 27,800 Vietnam veterans in the area, Smellgrove's

The Vietnamese survivor

BY TERESA TSALAKY

A thick mist hung over the tree tops in South Vietnam. Above it, helicopter blades whirred louder than the buzz of jungle insects below. Suddenly, the sharp cracking sound of bullets penetrated the helicopter's metal exterior. Loss of control. Panic. Ten eternal seconds. Then blackness.

Khamsone Keokenlaya awoke to the pain of metal cutting deep into his left thigh.

"Hieu!" he yelled. "Hieu! Hieu!"

Reaching over to his friend's limp body, he grabbed the cold, lifeless shoulder. Sorrow and fear blackened his mind. Then anger. He could lie there in silence and wait to die. But no, he was angry enough to fight; angry enough to survive.

For more than two weeks he stumbled through the jungle, imagining enemy troops following closely behind.

He does not know if they were really behind him, but in his hysteria he believed they were, so he kept running southward. When his strength gave out, he would fall to the ground and eat whatever the jungle provided.

"I eat insect, berry, and plant," he said.

With only a knife and first-aid kit, he was determined to live. On the seventeenth day, when he had pushed himself to his mental and physical limits, Khamsone heard the sound of an approaching helicopter. His first instinct was to run and hide, but there was little strength left in his legs.

"I think maybe they no see me if I no move. But then I think maybe they come get me. I decide I ready to die if they Communist."

Having no flare, he laid flat on the ground in a clearing and opened his vest so the red interior would be visible. Two possibilities flashed through his mind over and over: live or die, survival or death.

On September 8, 1973, Khamsone was rescued from the interior of the jungle. Two years later, he secretly fled his country with 65 other people in a 40-foot fishing boat.

Once a day the boat people ate a meal consisting of small chunks of dried squid and a cup of rice.

Now Khamsone lives in Dutch Harbor, Alaska, working as a mechanic for Pacific Pearl Seafoods Inc.

In his free time, he often walks over to the "butchers" section, smiles courteously at someone thrusting live crags against a triangular blade, and says, "You work too hard. You take break. I kill crabs now."

Killing is of little consequence to Khamsone.

He once told some friends, "If I get mad at him, I kill him. I no think about it. I just do it. Easy."

Other South Vietnamese who were willing to talk about the war told of lifelong experiences that make the past sufferings of our own Vietnam veterans sound like a ten-minute picnic.

So Van Ngo has two brothers in prison in Vietnam. "All the men of the family would leave the house to go fight, except one," he told me. "One man would stay home to protect the mother and children. In my family, I was the youngest man, so I would stand at the window with a gun and watch." So was 14 years old at the time.

Loi Nguyen recently sent $2,000 to his mother in Vietnam to be used to get her out of the country. He doesn't know if she is dead or in prison or living in another place. Every week for five years he has written a letter to her, even though he has never received one in return. He is holding on to the futile hope that she simply can not send letters out of the country.

Vietnamese have a deep longing to be back with their own families in their own country, but not under Communist rule.

Loi used to stand at his job in the seafood processor and stare into nothingness for hours. When asked what he was thinking about, the usual reply was, "My country." •

office helps between three and five hundred a month, he said.

"One of the things we tried to do was to build the reputation that we are not the V.A.," he said. "Many veterans will not go to the Veterans Administration because of the red tape involved at the government agency. They think the government screwed them over in Vietnam and they'll do it again," he said.

White and Smellgrove said it is important for a service provider such as the Disabled American Veterans to help the troubled veteran on the spot.

"When they come in I get them to talk to find out what areas to work on besides counseling. Once these areas are identified, I channel him to one of our psychiatrists or psychologists (trained and certified) and I work on other aspects such as getting them a job, getting a marriage counselor or getting them some food. I want to get those kinds of stresses off him while he is working on the Vietnam stresses," he said.

Smellgrove meets Vietnam veterans "on their own terms," anywhere at any time.

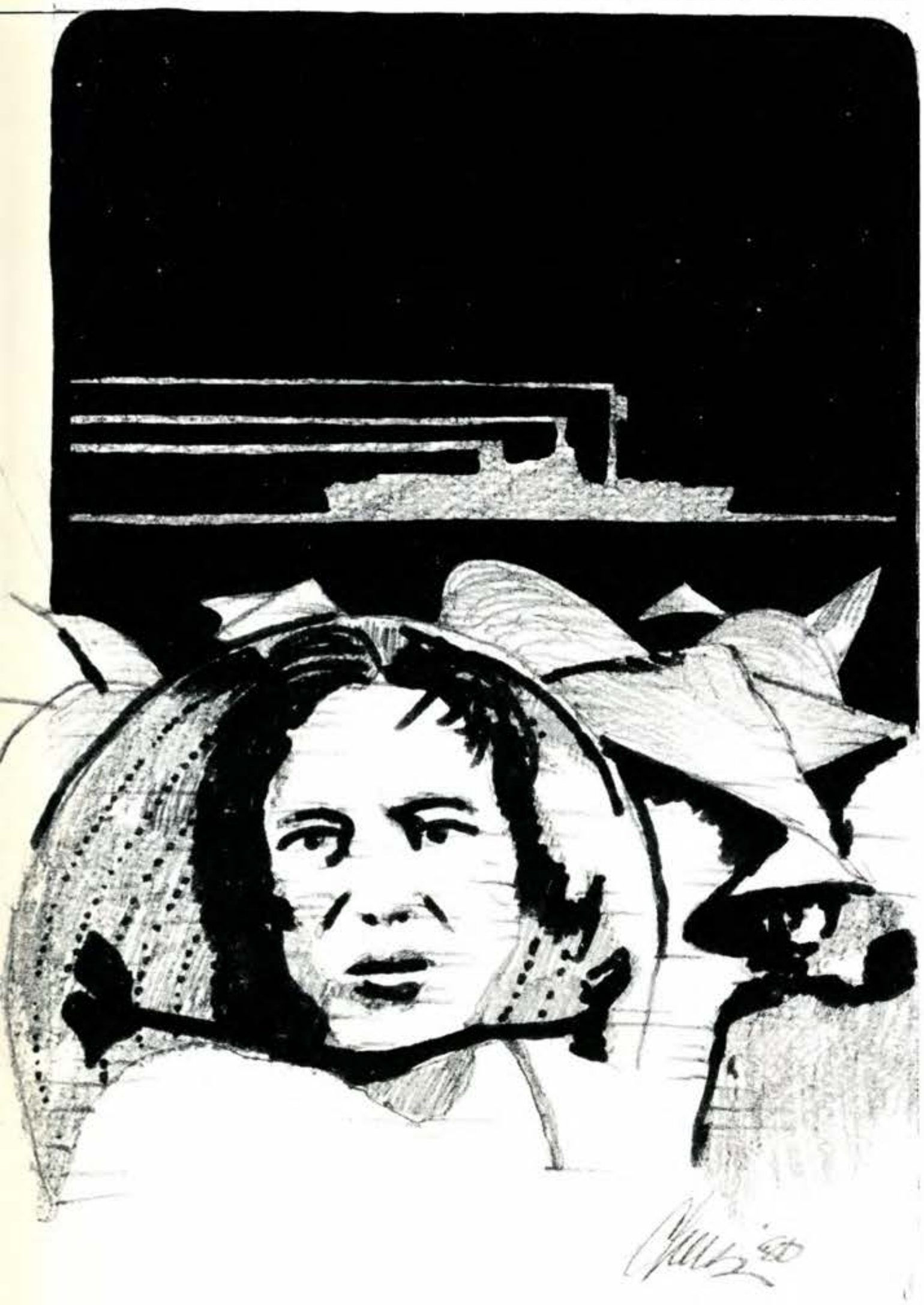
Growing concern among Vietnam veterans about unemployment and health benefits, as well as Delayed Stress, prompted 10 Washington state legislators to form a special House Select Committee on Vietnam Veterans. The issues are of special interest to them since eight of the 10 are Vietnam veterans.

In recent open forums held in Tacoma, Spokane and Seattle, the Committee heard testimony from service organizations and veterans themselves; about unemployment, health difficulties stemming from the spraying of Agent Orange in Vietnam (an herbicide which contained TCDD, a dioxin known to be deadly to man, from which many Vietnam veterans are claiming disabilities), and delayed stress.

The Vietnam veterans who testified were angry and emotional. They told of inability to be gainfully employed and scorned the idea of government help through CETA programs and food stamps. They expressed disgust with the Veterans Administration, but most of all, they asked why. Why they could not get the help they sought.

A major report on these hearings and the findings of the House Select Committee on Vietnam veterans will be presented to the legislature this winter, Co-chairman, Representative Steve Tupper said.

Perhaps some help is on the way. But it will take some time and understanding from society to even begin to bring these forgotten warriors back home, safe and secure again



And I have two infant daughters
And I thank God I have no son.
Now they say the war is over,
But I think it's just begun.

from The Ballad of Penny Evans
by Steve Goodman •


'80

FOXES

of Squalicum Creek

BY PAUL LINDHOLDT

A red fox stepped from a blackberry tangle and regarded the bicyclist with mild interest. Ears twitching, nose licked wet, the fox paused, yawned, then glanced both up and down the road before ambling across to the cannery docks.

Was this someone's stray pet? A refugee from a zoo?

Definitely not, residents of the Squaliculm Creek area assured. Along with her mate and litter of now-grown pups, this American red fox has found that coexistence with mankind can have its rewards.

Walt Daub has lived near Squalicum Creek for fifteen years. During that time he's seen skunks, opossums, rabbits and raccoons—some spattered on the roadway, others begging at his window. This is the first year foxes have shown up.

"They've established regular routes around the neighborhood," Daub said. Near six o'clock each evening they checked the yard for handouts which they've learned to take, literally, from his hand. Sometimes the vixen would gather a mouthful of scraps and trot back across Eldridge Way to disappear into thick brush where the pups lay waiting for her.

Many homeowners in the area have seen the foxes. Some worry that the animals will eventually grow too reliant upon charity and lose the instinct to fend for themselves. Other residents fear that the foxes may harm pet dogs or cats.

So far, however, the creatures seem to be doing more good than harm. The burgeoning of industry along our waterfront—marinas, mills, canneries—has produced new habitat for the rats and mice upon which foxes feed. By moving into and policing this area, the wild canines fill an artificial niche that demands a natural predator. Further, it is believed that foxes clean up finfish and shellfish that might otherwise decay and spread bacteria.

Thus the red fox continues to thrive around this nation. Whereas many bird and animal species are threatened by the clearing of forest land for pasture and agriculture, and moreover have trouble living side by side with humans, the fox has proved unusually adaptable, increasing its numbers almost everywhere.

Except for dogs, coyotes and men, the fox has no enemies. When overcrowding occurs, its populations are kept in check by virtual epidemics of distemper and mange. Trappers and hunters also kill some foxes every year.

But the family of foxes at Squalicum Creek is more than just a novelty. Their presence affirms our community as a part of, not apart from, our natural surroundings.

Tail held out straight behind her, the vixen crossed Squalicum Way and approached the Bellingham Cold Storage security station as though preparing to clock in for a long shift. The guard looked down, surprised to see a red fox acting so casual. She glanced up at him and hurried on toward the creek. •